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Unleashing the Power of the Millennials: Adapting Forensic Extemporaneous Speaking to Make Positive Use of Communication Technology in a Digital Age

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Abstract

Like all forensics events, Extemporaneous Speaking has evolved over the last 40 years to reflect changes in the larger societal culture as well as in the culture of the forensics community. The last 15 years or so, especially, have seen changes at an accelerated pace as natives to the digital age have risen from undergraduate competitors to become graduate assistant coaches and program directors. This changing of the guard has resulted in significant changes that have altered the event in ways that reflect the culture of this so called "millennial generation." However, some of these changes have done little to advance any positive learning objectives; to the contrary, they have skewed the focus of the event away from defensible pedagogical goals in favor of practices that seem to serve solely to make the event more competitively challenging. At the same time, other adaptations that would provide this digital generation of students with more transferable skills have been thwarted by rule or by custom. This paper seeks to set forth recommendations that put us on a better path as we adapt to changing times while maintaining some critical pedagogical traditions.

In the "Convention Supplement" of the Western Association of Teachers of Speech annual convention in November 1937, the Intercollegiate Forensic Activities Strand announced:

"Preservation of Democratic Liberties" has been selected as the theme for the discussion, extemporaneous speaking, oratory and debate projects in the annual tournaments in the Western Association. The program will take the form of a laboratory project, which embodies principles of integration. All the activities will be united around one central theme, the aim of which is a systematic, comprehensive, and functional presentation of the subject. The discussion and debating will take the form of a five stage progression following John Dewey's sequence of problem, solution, action as described in his "How We Think." The oratory and extemporaneous speaking will parallel and supplement this progression. The orations will be prepared to fit into three symposia: namely, "Technology and Democracy," "Economic Planning and Democracy," and "Public Opinion and Democracy." The extemporaneous speakers will be prepared to draw topics and speak on the social and ethical, political, and personal philosophies incidental to Democracy. (1937)

Social and ethical, political and personal philosophies delineated the categories on which extemporaneous speakers at these 1937 tournaments would speak—not the domestic, economic, international categories that characterize most tournaments today.

It is almost a certainty that "extempers" today would look on the categories of the 1937 tournament with great amusement and not a little disdain; with equal certainty, one can imagine that the teachers of speech who organized the tournaments in 1937 would be appalled that extemporaneous speaking categories of most contests today are devoid of any overt value orientation. The point here is not to argue for a return to the "good ole days" of extemporaneous speeches that extolled the virtues of democracy. Rather, this passage illustrates how much extemporaneous speaking has changed from then to now. Moreover, through all of the changes—either by design or cultural drift—certainly there were those who thought the event had lost its bearings and was doomed to fail to teach the students who suffered these changes appropriate and useful lessons that could help take them through life. Well, we are doing all right.

The point of this walk down memory lane is to illustrate a central way in which extemp has adapted to meet the cultural imperatives of the day. Change is inevitable. So is resistance to that change, because with change comes uncertainty; and we don't like uncertainty. Consequently, resistance to change is not surprising. Change, however, comes nonetheless. Our tendency, when the inevitable occurs, is to first ignore it. Then, we condemn it. Then, we try to incorporate that change into that to which we are already accustomed. Finally, we face it on its own terms and adapt. We "grow into it;" it changes us.

What is true of social change in general may be even truer in the case of our communication technology. New waves of technological change in how we communicate—once we have adapted to it—affect us in ways that can cut to the core of who we are. Television arguably represents the most dramatic leap forward in communication technology in the 20th Century. Adapting to the advent of T. V. was awkward at best. Early television programming was very similar to the radio programming that preceded it. Radio producers were not sure what to do with this new medium; so, they tried to do what they had always done; only now there would be visual images. Eventually, producers figured out how to program for T. V. on its own terms. They "grew into it;" it changed us all. Moreover, Gumpert and Cathcart (2008) assert that "each generation inherits an idiosyncratic media structure . . . those born into the age of radio perceive the world differently than those born into the age of television" (29). We are how we communicate.

Clearly, we are in the midst of another radically transformative wave in communication technology—we have come into the digital age. This change has presented us with challenges not unlike those that radio producers faced, except

the change is broader and runs deeper in our culture than the advent and proliferation of television ever could. In the forensic community we have struggled with how to respond to these new technologies (Gehrke, 1998) AND to a generation that was born into this brave new world of communication technology—the so-called Millennials—whose “idiosyncratic media structure” is more integral to who they are than any generation before them.

Specifically, this paper argues that as the presence and influence of millennial culture in forensics has grown, practices in forensics extemporaneous speaking have reflected that change. However, some of these changes have done little to advance any positive learning objectives; to the contrary they have skewed the focus of the event away from defensible pedagogical goals in favor of practices that seem to serve solely to make the event more competitively challenging. At the same time, other adaptations that would provide this digital generation of students with more transferable skills have been thwarted by rule or by custom. This paper seeks to set forth a set of recommendations that put us on a better path as we adapt to changing times while maintaining some critical pedagogical traditions.

In order to achieve these ends, we will, first, briefly discuss the rise of the millennial generation; second, determine and critique how the practice of extemporaneous speaking has changed in some key ways because of millennial influences; third, examine and critique how the forensics community has either resisted or failed to adapt pedagogy and practices in extemporaneous speaking to the digital age; and finally, make some recommendations for consideration as we move forward.

The Rise of the Millennials

The rising generation—though variously labeled—is most often labeled as either Generation Y or the Millennial Generation. One of the Millennial’s defining characteristics, to the extent that a generation has defining characteristics, is that they cannot recall a time before computerized communication. They are native to a highly mediated culture (Rushkoff, 2006); the rest of us are not. Wilson (2004) observes that this generation is “tech-savvy;” the rest of us, not so much. McGlynn notes, “These students spend hours surfing Web sites, instant-messaging, interacting on MySpace and Facebook, talking on their cell phones, text-messaging, playing video games, and so forth” (20); the rest of us largely do not. The lion’s share of those of us who teach and coach the Millennials are not nearly as comfortable with digital technology as they are. Where Rushkoff (2006) may see those of us born earlier as immigrants to this rising culture, we might better see the Millennials as invaders wielding superior weapons that we must learn to use if we are to survive in this “new world.” Unlike the Native Americans, however, who never saw the Europeans coming, we knew what was coming. In 2000, just before the turn of the millennium, the Millennials began attending college (DeBard, 2004); we were not ready.

Clearly, this generation is not like any other generation. And it is not just that they have more high tech communication toys. In fact, Serazio (2008) argues that this generation and the culture that it has spawned is bound up with the media landscape in which it lives. To understand this generation is to understand its media and vice-versa. They are mutually defining. Their characteristics include:

- Flexible
- User-centric
- Mobile
- Interactive
- Unlimited
- Multidirectional
- Open-ended
- Nonlinear
- Empowering
- Hierarchy-flattening
- Appropriation-able
- Exhibitionistic
- Upgradeable
- Progressing
- Converging
- Networked
- On-demand (Serazio, 2008, p. 16)

Looking at this list and thinking about our students and their communication/information technology, the relationships jump out at us. Today’s technology (like the iPhone) is flexible in its applications and uses; our students are flexible multi-taskers. The technology is highly mobile; so are they. The uses of this technology are unlimited; the Millennials believe their potential is unlimited. The technology promotes exhibitionism; the Millennials do not have the same needs for privacy that earlier generations have. The technology is appropriable; from Napster to sampling, Millennials are embedded in a culture of appropriation. These parallels go on and on.

Millennial culture and the digital technology that supports it and drives it (and vice versa), increasingly permeates the community of forensics participants. They were our students as early as a decade ago. Now, they are our graduate assistants and our budding young coaches. Through their influence (needs, demands) and the pressures to not be left behind, many of us have been assimilated into their distinct culture to varying degrees. Our activity and, specifically extemp—which is the focus of this paper—have been affected, both positively and negatively, by the spread of this digital culture.

Changes in Extemporaneous Speaking

The coming of this digital age has had a narrow but significant impact on how we practice extemporaneous speaking in forensics. By way of acknowledgement, much of what is written here is based on personal observation/discussion as a 35-year participant in this activity. Clearly, digital culture has influenced pedagogy and practices in extemp. The most noticeable impact has been on how we teach and conduct research. Congalton and Olson (1995) expound on how the access to electronic retrieval systems has impacted forensics. Many of us recall the days of trudging to the library with

our rolls of dimes to do research on microfilm or microfiche, or buying two copies of newspapers and magazines so we could rip different articles on back-to-back pages for our extemp files. Digital technology and digitized information have radically altered this process. We rarely trudge to the library. Now, most extempers do the bulk of their research from the comfort of their dorm rooms, apartments, or team rooms via computer through databases like Lexis/Nexis. Most of our students have no idea what microfiche is. Instead of ripping and filing, our students capture and print articles. Digital communication/information has significantly cut the time needed to thoroughly research any topic and has given almost universal access to resources from around the globe. We can all agree that having virtually universal access to literally a “world of information” is good; it is at its core a positive.

Until recently, nearly all of the voluminous research we now access on-line was printed and hard copies filed in the ubiquitous evidence tubs that are rolled/dragged across many campuses each year between September and April. Some teams, however, are starting to rely on electronic filing. So, filing has started to go paperless. Increasingly relying on paperless files has the potential to make the activity greener, which is a positive.

Further incorporation of digital information technologies into extemp practices is very limited. This can be attributed to a number of reasons. Initially, broad access to the necessary hardware was not available. Given this, opponents of technology at tournaments cited the need to try to maintain a level playing field between technology rich and technology poor programs.

As well, extemp prep room security concerns have mitigated against technology use during tournaments. Laptops are relatively small and easy to conceal making them easy to steal (we all remember the year Illinois State’s computers were stolen). No host wants to be responsible for providing the level of security needed to assure the safety of participants’ hardware.

Finally, gaining/providing Internet access on campus to all participants (again, the level playing field) has been virtually impossible to secure or guarantee. Consequently, the forensics community has developed a subculture of researching night owls. Debate always had them (as long as a library was open); extemp practices have now fostered them as extempers engage in digital accessing of information at night in hotel rooms as they try to anticipate what the next day’s competition might bring in the way of questions. In today’s extemp landscape, having “up to the minute” sources of information can often translate into a competitive edge.

While very positive on its face, digital culture and access has had some negative consequences in the form of ever-rising expectations. First, because the digital age has brought a virtually unlimited access to sources via the Internet and on-line subscriptions to various news outlets and

databases, there is an expectation that extempers will incorporate an increased number of sources of external support for their arguments (Congalton and Olson, 1995; Brown, 2008). Brown (2008) laments that even the repeat use of a source is viewed negatively—after all, this newfound easy access should be reflected in a diversification of sources (23). Since this paper cites the Brown article several times, I guess the reader must discount the arguments that rely on data from this source (though it is quite exotic). The prevailing attitude seems to be the more sources you have the better your speech is (hence, the more competitively successful you are).

Further, there is an expectation that sources will be of a “higher quality” now that more sources are readily available. Research and experience confirms that once credible domestic weekly news magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, or *Business Week*, and other once common sources of information, are no longer acceptable (Brown, 2008; Colvert, 1994; McCann, 2002). In fact, because the easy accessibility of news and information has been dramatically increased by new technologies, the need for these weekly summaries of important news is not as great as it once was. The loss of high school and collegiate subscriptions alone was probably enough to push them to the brink of bankruptcy.

This shift away from common weekly news magazines is not accompanied by an embracing of mainstream daily news sources; rather, sources are becoming increasingly obscure. Today, there is a bias toward citing international sources. Brown (2008) notes that Reuters and the Agence France Press, for instance, are accepted sources to cite in an extemp speech while our domestic Associated Press generally is not, though all three are similarly reliable news wire services, because international sources have greater cache because they are seen as more “exotic” (21). Yes, as Olson and Congalton (1995) claim, having more diverse sources of data expands the vision of extemp participants and mitigates against ethnocentrism (144); but that does not mean we should subordinate domestic news outlets to international ones. Not only do extempers feel pressured to privilege international sources, Colvert (1994) found that extempers gravitate toward more specialized and less mainstream sources (4-5). As a result of these pressures, extempers feel compelled to load up their files with much more research from far more and more far-flung sources than ever before if they hope to be competitive.

This discriminating palate for only the finest of obscure sources would be fine if it were based on any kind of serious comparative analysis of source credibility. It is not. Rather, what usually happens (if we are honest about it) is that varsity extempers hand the sacred source list to novice extempers who are told, “All of your articles must be filed from these sources only!” No questions are asked; no explanations are given beyond, “This is how it is done.” Every novice extemper invariably, in a frantic attempt to finish their filing before the van leaves for the tournament, will let an errant *USA Today* article or a ubiquitous *Sacramento Bee* article slip by because they have not yet memorized the list,

and they don't yet understand how inviolate the sacred list is. That is, until some sophomore varsity member draws just the right question to expose the sacrilege. His or her *Sacramento Bee* filing humiliation of less than one year hence still stinging their memory, the sophomore launches! Words fly! Vitriol spews! Heads roll! Those faint of heart (or mind! to hear the sophomore tell it) drop from the extemp squad. Only the gluttons for punishment stay. Order returns. Filing responsibilities increase to take up the slack.

One somewhat positive consequence has come out of excessive filing demands: Millennials prefer cooperative or collaborative learning (Elam, Stratton, and Gibson, 2007). The pressure to have super extensive files has led to the rise of research consortiums among smaller forensics teams, who do not feel they have the human resources to keep up with these research demands alone. Just kidding! In reality the need to create consortiums is a very sad commentary on the pressure to bulk up the "quantity" and "quality" of research in our files.

Further exacerbating the competitive pressure on extempers is the expectation that students will present their speeches without any written notes. One American Forensic Association National Tournament District Committee actually developed recommended judging criteria that stated that extemp speakers using no notes should "get credit" over those who have them (Olson, 1989, 436). So, "no notes" is more than mere custom or norm. At the same time, these speeches are expected to have all of the polish of the prepared public speaking events that are a part of our activity.

At the 1995 NFA national tournament at Eastern Michigan University, one of the speakers in the final round incorporated a note card into her presentation. While acknowledging that hers was a well-structured, well-argued, and effectively delivered speech, all but one judge ranked the contestant last (her ranks were 1, 6, 6, 6, 6) and gave the use of a note card as the determinant factor in her sixth place ranking. The mere fact of the presence of a note card and not any ineffectiveness of its use was the reason for their decision. To add injury to insult, more than one judge was indignant that a national finalist in extemporaneous speaking thought that a note card was in any way acceptable. This was a student whose analytical skills were unassailable; she just could not memorize sources and dates in the prep time allowed; so, she put them, and only them, on a note card. For this, she was deemed undeserving of any further consideration.

So, what are we left with here? In thirty minutes, students are expected to develop 7-minute speeches—with the overall and internal structures memorized (or mentally noted) and have cogent, clear and compelling analyses to support the positions they are advancing with upwards of a dozen separate pieces of data from a similar number of specialized, often international, and hopefully exotic sources—and commit it all to memory. Is it any wonder that judges are concerned about canned speeches (Brown, 2008; Cronn-Mills and Croucher, 2001)? WE must do better.

The pedagogical value in this "extreme sport" is not apparent. Extemporaneous speaking without notes seems to have no justification other than to make the event more competitively challenging. As Shafer (2005) charges, "Many students who choose to compete without notes in extemporaneous speaking, and many of the coaches and judges who encourage and reward it, do so for competitive gain, not educationally sound reasons" (33). This practice does not impart any significant transferable skill to students. Instead, it creates a pressure cooker in which students either will rise to the challenge (via whatever means necessary) or, if not coached with care, will crack under the pressure (Compton, 2005). The parallels Aden (2002) draws between the choices of the extemp speaker to the choices in US Presidential policy-oriented speaking may be more apropos than he intended. He advises extempers to approach the speech as if they were briefing the President. In the first-year student's mind, I am sure the pressure levels are about the same.

What we are creating in forensics extemporaneous speaking is a practice that takes a cultural positive—almost universal access to the world of information—and turns it into an educational liability. Under intense pressure to achieve—and Millennials already do this to themselves enough without any additional pressure from coaches (Wilson, 2004; DeBard, 2004)—these students may resort to taking shortcuts that may be less than honest (Brown, 2008; Wehler, 2009). One extemper rattled on herself in her senior year persuasive speech in which she admitted fabricating sources in a speech her first year. She went on to state that what she did (and is ashamed of having done) is pervasive. Dishonesty abounds. While not excusing the perpetrators, she lays the blame on the cross pressures of two expectations: "Judges demand competitors to be off the note card and they demand more and more sources. This does not remove blame from students like me who have made unethical choices, but it does shed some light on the situation competitors are in" (Wehler, 2009, p. 56). We MUST do better.

Millennials are adept at gaming the system (Wilson, 2004). They are so accustomed to adapting to changing circumstances and finding time saving pathways of least resistance to truncate tasks that they may have difficulty distinguishing between what is and what is not fair and appropriate behavior. If I fabricate quotes, that is cheating. But if I choose the most difficult and obscure question (Turnipseed, 2005), and if I know that certain articles I read deal with that topic, I might cite them without verification because anybody who might check will find those issues in the article cited, and if I am reasonably sure my judges won't know the difference, that's not lying, is it? If I make up sources, then that is clearly cheating; but if we have some preset generic shells or briefs that my squad mates and I can use across a whole class of question types, that's just being smart, right? We must DO better.

I was shocked to learn last year that teams use pre-prepped materials beyond their research files—which is what leads to those canned speeches about which judges are expressing so much concern (Cronn-Mills & Croucher, 2001). It seems

that to maximize productivity in the 30 minutes of prep time, extemp squads have resorted to creating shells, much the same way as debaters use shells. If one learns the shells, all the extemper has to do is plug in the appropriate sources. This is NOT extemporaneous speaking. We must do BETTER.

Resistance to Change in Extemporaneous Speaking

While in some ways we have embraced the technology that the digital age has brought us, mostly we act like radio producers—trying to conform new media to our old practices. Our extemp practices do not take advantage of much of what this technology has to offer. Rather than adapting to changing technology, at first, we banned it. Then, we allowed computers into the prep room, but they could not be on-line. Currently prep is to be without Internet access. There is anecdotal evidence that this restriction has not always been universally followed (Brown, 2008). So, the legitimate purpose of digital technology has been rendered illegitimate in forensic pedagogy and practice. As Brown notes (2008), using the Internet is more than just a rule violation; it is an ethical breach against that level playing field that we would like to think we have. Finding a much needed source is so much easier if you can scan the Internet (23); however, under today's rules, to go on-line would bestow unearned work ethic credit on the student in the judge's eyes (24) as opposed to the judge applauding the student's effectiveness in culling out the right support materials from an expansive database of sources.

Brown's analysis raises an interesting conundrum. How can we stop access? Given that this technology is becoming smaller, more portable, and more easily concealed (iPhones are undetectable in a pocket), and given the proliferation of subscriptions to on-line information services, the prohibition against going on-line is virtually impossible to enforce. Anyone can do it undetected in a bathroom stall. Should we, therefore, forbid potty breaks?

The absurdity of what we may have to do to enforce a "no on-line access during extemp prep" rule should tell us something. It is time to change. Creating files is an obsolete means of storing and retrieving information. Very few if any professionals rely on paper files anymore, and computerized files are a poor use of the available technology. Finally, prohibiting on-line research is becoming less and less pedagogically defensible because learning to do so is a critical skill set that prepares students for their future demands as researchers or public speakers (Voth 1997).

Our adherence to 20th Century methods does nothing to promote participation in extemp either—quite the contrary. Millennials prefer to learn skills that are relevant to their lives (McGlynn, 2008). For them education is about making connections to the real world, not just learning stuff for stuff's sake (Wilson, 2005). They want to know that courses and programs provide them with knowledge and skills that have transferability for future endeavors. For better or worse, Millennials see higher education as training for their careers and other pursuits, not as intrinsically valuable. While we

may bemoan the loss of intellectual curiosity as sufficient motivation to learn, we must acknowledge, especially in our activity, that the skill sets we cultivate in our students should have application beyond the activity.

Despite our best efforts to forestall it, change is going to come. The digital age has radically altered how we access information. Our students are culturally technologically connected. That technology is becoming more personal in size. Old paradigms for how we do what we do when we do extemp research and prep will soon be entirely obsolete. We need to change before change makes what we do an anti-quarian and isolated activity that will shrink until it disappears. We can and we must do better.

It would be so easy if we could just blame all that is not right with extemp on a judging pool that is ill equipped to adjudicate the event beyond applying only the most superficial standards. Other forensics events have had to endure much worse judges (Haston, 1960). Typically, extemporaneous speaking rounds are not assigned to lay judges as often as are events that require less familiarity with current events. Forensics directors, coaches, and graduate assistants judge the lion's share of these rounds—all of us who have considerable training and experience. If we see nothing wrong with the state of extemp, our blindness may be our doom. If we can see how our expectations have tipped the balance between our educational mission and our competitive format too much in favor of competition (Shafer, 2005), we must take action to restore that balance. We must interface more wisely with the digital culture around us.

Recommendations for the Future

Forensics, if it is to continue to be a thriving community, must do a better job of adapting to these new patterns of communication and information sharing that have arisen in this digital age. We are now nearly 30 years into this techno-driven culture. We can no longer ignore it. We can no longer condemn it as a threat to learning the supposedly invaluable skill of creating, populating, and maintaining the kind of extensive files that are demanded in forensics today. If we do not still engage in the practice of beating our rugs on a line strung up outdoors, this argument will not wash. Technology can and often does make doing things differently possible, advantageous and desirable. We do a disservice if we continue to require students to use their/our computers as little more than electronic evidence tubs. What a waste of potential! It is time to adapt. In other words, we must meet our students where they are—firmly ensconced in the digital age. This means instituting actually only two changes—one has far-reaching implications for how we teach extemporaneous speaking in our team rooms and squad meetings. The other just makes good, sound, pedagogical sense.

First, we need to better integrate technology into forensic activities—in this case extemp. If this means that we need to work to become more proficient in the same technologies our students know in order to use the technologies they are comfortable with (McGlynn, 2008), then we need to put in the time and effort. Our students are looking for transferable

skills; they are not going to find them in a filing tub—actual or electronic.

In a conversation with a recent graduate of West Chester University, he praised his extemp experience for teaching him how to effectively and efficiently conduct research, how to conduct a thorough analysis of an issue, and how to express his views on that issue clearly and persuasively. This student, Russ Moll, recently graduated from University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs program with a Master's degree in Human Security. In the coming weeks he will begin working for a government contractor in Washington, D.C. as a strategic analyst. One skill that he is certain (after rounds of interviews) he will not need is how to file thousands of articles for possible retrieval to create a presentation in a half hour. What he is certain he will be doing is in-depth research on a variety of databases to assist him with creating and testing scenarios in his work on assigned security projects (Moll, personal interview, July 23, 2010; Moll personal interview, July 30, 2010). His new employer was very impressed with his research, analysis, and communication experience and skills; his information storage and retrieval (filing) acumen never came up as a useful skill (one of his interviewers is a former forensicator herself).

In the age of paper, building and maintaining an effective filing system had great value. When digital communication was not as easily accessible as it is today, electronic imitations of these paper files made sense. That time has passed. We do students a disservice if we continue to require them to create and manage files of massive amounts of information in a manner they are never likely to use again. Moreover, given the expectations of judges for more and more diverse sources, building these files is tremendously time consuming. Putting the "more sources/specialized and exotic sources" genie back into the bottle is virtually impossible. Creating and managing extemp files commensurate with this ever-rising expectation is a redundancy that we will be hard pressed to defend. Such files have already been created and are continually updated; they are on-line databases. Extemp files just create subsets of these already existing files. We have the means to access on-line databases. We should permit on-line access to these on-line files in extemp prep.

Inaction has already and will continue to discourage participation by all but the largest extemp squads. The numbers of extempers at our national tournaments is not consistently so low because making limited preparation speeches is so daunting to most competitors—impromptu makes that quite clear. It is because of the extensive time commitment. Millennial students are also notoriously busy. They have always been activities samplers. They are highly (and perhaps not so deeply) involved and tightly scheduled. This is not likely to change because they have come to college. They may continue to join numerous clubs and organizations on campus (Wilson, 2004). As well, millennial students may be stretched to their physical and mental limits and overscheduled because they hold jobs; plus many volunteer

(Wilson, 2005). We have to be able to effectively compete with classes, other co-curricular activities, extra-curricular activities, work, social engagements, etc. The alternative is to become an exclusive activity supported by fewer and fewer teams. Our students are not as willing as we were to pour a tremendous amount of time into any one activity—especially if they don't see their futures in what that activity is teaching them.

Allowing on-line computer access in extemp prep is possible in ways it was not just a couple of years ago. Campuses routinely provide temporary guest accounts to their servers. Where this is not possible, visiting teams can bring their own access. With advancements of technologies like smart phones and mobile Internet service via 3G and the beginnings of 4G networks, on-line searches are possible just about anywhere. So, the rationale that on-line access puts an undue burden on the tournament host is no longer a valid issue.

Mobile Internet service is affordable and sufficient to meet a team's travel needs. The top two providers of 3G mobile Internet service for laptops—Verizon and AT&T—charge \$60 per month for 5GB of data usage (Top Ten Reviews, 2010). This cap on usage should be sufficient for use while prepping at tournaments. Verizon, Sprint, and AT&T aim their mobile Internet service as a solution for business professionals who regularly travel and need reliable access to the Internet wherever they may find themselves. As a supplement to home or office Internet access, 5GB is plenty of data for a secondary Internet connection (Evdoinfo, 2006).

Another concern that has been raised along these lines is what about those times when Internet service goes down? First, this is not a very common occurrence today; mobile Internet service is highly reliable. If it should happen that access fails, all extempers will be in the same boat. They will have to use their existing knowledge and their skills of analysis to compete in the round(s). That is not a tragedy. If only some extempers cannot get on line, what then? We are a community; we should act like one. If not, teams go digital fully aware that the decision is not risk free. We should allow coaches in consultation with their teams to make that decision for themselves.

If electronic retrieval systems have served to level the playing field among squads by giving them all equal access to a wealth of information (Congalton & Olson, 1995, 145), imagine how level the playing field would be if everyone were able to access the Internet during prep. The inordinate amount of time that goes into creating files would be eliminated. Thus, an extemp squad of one or two students would be on nearly the same footing as a squad of fifteen.

To assure that students are not communicating with squad mates and coaches would be a challenge, especially if we insist on fitting digitized extemp prep realities into hard copy extemp prep methods. For instance, with mobile Internet access to retrieve information individually, squads would not have to be clustered in the same physical space to

share physical files. Perhaps all first speakers would sit together and monitor one another; all second speakers would sit together; and so forth. It is not hard to tell if someone is typing a message versus typing in search terms. Any unethical communication beyond the prep room under this configuration cannot be monitored today; so, it is a nonissue when considering whether or not on-line access during prep is workable. The bottom line here is that we have to be willing to think outside the box to bring today's technologies into our activity.

Allowing online access to information during extemp prep would lead to other benefits as well. How we spend our coaching time in extemp could be radically altered to become much more educational. Extemp squad meetings could be focused on explaining why some sources of information are better than others, how to construct sound arguments and how to effectively employ various forms of reasoning. Squads could spend their time analyzing important issues of the day together instead of haggling over filing assignments that might be left undone or done in haste. As coaches, we could actually teach our students through any information discrimination deficits that can come from being literally bombarded by endless streams of information.

As Wilson (2004) notes, information saturation renders Millennials naïve about evaluating sources of information. They think little about author's agendas, points of view expressed, quality and accuracy of content, fair and balanced coverage, source reliability and relevance of information. Our students don't necessarily intentionally misuse information; sometimes, they just do not know any better. Being able to focus on these areas in coaching is pedagogically warranted. Surely, we would much rather teach on those issues than re-teach how to manage the files. Reaching millennial students in order to engage, motivate, and inspire them means situating what we do at that intersection between how they learn and how we teach (McGlynn, 2008).

Second, as any good Burkeian knows, we need some permanence with our change. Students competing in extemporaneous speaking should be permitted to use a note card or not use a note card without penalty as long as they are effective in executing that choice. We can debate whether or not speaking from limited notes means written notations or if mental notes are also limited notes. That debate has raged for years with no clear resolution in sight. What we have yet to hear, however, is any rational and convincing argument that there is an inherent weakness in needing and using notes. This debate over whether or not using notes impacts speaker credibility and effectiveness is not new (Hostettler, 1955); the arguments that having no written notes is better are no more convincing today than they were 55 years ago. What matters is how students incorporate the use of notes into their presentations. Moreover, memorizing a dozen sources that are distributed across a pre-constructed, memorized shell or brief is not only antithetical to limited preparation and unethical; it has no particular pedagogical value because it has little transferability.

On the other hand, people give presentations using notes all the time. Compared to memorizing briefs and sources, effective note handling is a much more teachable and pedagogically defensible skill. When someone is skilled at speaking from written notes, they can be as credible and persuasive as the person who speaks from mental "notes." This is a skill worth cultivating. Further, the requirement of a note card has the potential to end once and for all claims of "I just got my sources in the wrong order" apologies that are all too common in extemp when students rely on mental "notes." Moreover, for the Luddites among us, it does not get much more low tech than a note card.

Conclusion

Like it or not, we live in the age of digital communication technology. For years, our community has ignored it, condemned it, and tried to mold it to our previous ways of doing things. Just as early television show producers wasted the potential of this revolutionary communication technology of the time—those were often visually stark and terrible shows—our reservations and our uncertainty are leading us to waste the promise of communication technology in the new millennium. In the process, we disserve the students in who compete in extemp, and we may be diminishing the ability of our community to attract students whose lives are steeped in this communication revolution. We can and we must do better.

By allowing on-line access to information during extemp prep, we can take advantage of not only the technology that we have had at our fingertips for decades now, but we can adapt forensics to the culture of the generation of students we are currently teaching—the Millennials. They and our community would both be better with this change.

Finally, we need to restore competitive reason to extemporaneous speaking. Expecting students to accomplish all that is now expected of them in their 30 minutes of prep and to keep it straight in their mental "notes" may be asking for the trouble we get. Students will find a way to let us think our expectations are being met all the while making compromises in their choices that they may fail to understand are not fully above board and ethical. Further, if it is what wins, our culture that despite its ideals promotes competition over learning (Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2001) will continue to get exactly what it deserves—a culture in which our ideals too easily may be compromised and a set of practices that are increasingly irrelevant to the future.

Our adaptation to digital technology need not take us to the end of the line with virtual tournaments. Such a beast should give us cause for pause and concern (Hinck, 2002). Public speaking and public performance is a live face-to-face experience. This is not to say that mediated communication, such as virtual or electronically reproduced performances, does not have its place. But mediated communication is not public communication, which is what our current slate of forensics events intends to teach. Within the clear parameters of what we do, there are many fruitful and pedagogically just-

fiable uses of digital communication that we can and should embrace.

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